

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 - 7. (Canceled)

Claim 8. (Currently Amended) An electrically activated switching valve for a high pressure pump, comprising:

a valve stem holding a valve member that interacts with a valve seat on a valve housing wherein said valve stem is positioned between a high pressure line and a return flow duct of said high pressure pump;

a valve spring providing a force in a first direction on said valve stem and valve member;

a valve guide for guiding said valve stem in said valve housing;

an activating device which, when activated, provides a force in a second direction opposite said first direction, to axially move said valve stem and said valve member in said valve housing, said valve member interacting with said valve seat on said valve housing to thereby determine a flow from said high pressure line through said valve, in a flow direction that corresponds to said first direction;

an annular space formed between said valve housing and said valve stem; and

an annular contact area formed between the valve member and the valve seat downstream of said annular space, wherein said contact area is bounded at a downstream edge thereof by a step adjoined by a flow optimizing guide surface on the valve member configured to form a substantially plate-shaped surface and thereby to avoid cavitation resulting from said flow from said high pressure line through said valve.

Claims 9- 21. (Canceled)

Claim 22. (Currently Amended) An electrically actuated switching valve for a high pressure pump, comprising:

a valve stem holding a valve member that interacts with a valve seat on a valve housing wherein said valve stem is positioned between a high pressure line and a return duct of said high pressure pump;

a valve spring providing a force in a first direction on said valve stem and said valve member;

a valve guide for guiding said valve stem in an inner circumferential opening of said valve housing;

an activating device which, when actuated provides a force in a

second direction opposite said first direction, to axially move said valve stem and said valve member in said circumferential opening of said valve housing wherein said valve member interacts with said valve seat on said valve housing to thereby determine a flow from said high pressure line through said valve, in a flow direction that corresponds to said first direction;

wherein said valve member has a step formed by a longitudinally extending offset in the upstream surface of said valve member, said step being concentric to said valve stem and having a radius which exceeds a radius of said inner circumferential opening of said valve housing; and

wherein said step portion is adjoined by a flow optimizing guide surface which is formed in a radially outer portion ~~of~~ on said valve member and is configured to form a substantially plate-shaped surface and thereby to avoid cavitation resulting from said flow from said high pressure line through said valve.

Claims 23 – 28 (Canceled)